



PUBLIC HEALTH

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HEALTHIER WASHINGTON**

Homeless Shelter Workgroup Recommendations
WA State Board of Health, September 8, 2004



The Process

- **The Board and Department convened 23-member workgroup with representatives from:**
 - state agencies
 - religious organizations
 - homeless advocates
 - homeless shelters
- **Three meetings were held:**
 - September 19, 2003
 - October 27, 2003
 - November 14, 2003
- **Joy King, DOH Performance Consultant, facilitated**
- **Meeting minutes are available**



Discussion Highlights

- 1. A homeless shelter is considered a transient accommodation under the current WAC and RCW if it offers three or more lodging units for less than one month. Money does not have to exchange.**
- 2. Many shelters believe they need not and should not be regulated under the TA statute.**
- 3. Desired outcomes identified by participants**
 - Ensure that if rules are written they make sense, add value, and set minimum standards without over-regulation
 - Ensure no beds are lost through regulation
 - Reduce redundancy of regulations
 - Ensure shelters are clean and sanitary
 - Determine if rules are necessary
 - Ensure regulations do not create a financial burden



Workgroup Recommendations

1. If the SBOH believes it has a statutory obligation to regulate homeless shelters, it should initiate a process to develop a new rule specific to homeless shelters and start the formal rule-making process.
2. The rule should be a stand-alone section or chapter, visibly distinct from the rules governing transient accommodations (hotels, motels, B&Bs, etc).
3. DOH should develop the rule in close, continuing collaboration with this workgroup or its designated subgroups and other stakeholders.
4. The rule should not require routine surveys of homeless shelters.



Workgroup Recommendations (cont)

5. The rule should preserve clear authority for local health jurisdictions and DOH to survey and require corrective action(s) as appropriate to achieve compliance when there is a complaint or potential imminent health hazard.
6. The rule should require a minimal registration fee rather than a licensing fee as currently required.
7. In defining which shelters would be governed by this rule, DOH and SBOH should be guided by the definition of homeless shelters proposed by this workgroup or a subset of this workgroup and other stakeholders.



Workgroup Recommendations (cont)

8. The rule should define minimum standards using the framework developed and proposed by this workgroup and other stakeholders.
9. The rule should expire after three years. Prior to expiration, DOH should then reconvene a Homeless Shelter Workgroup to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of these rules and from those discussions should recommend a future course of action to the Board.



Suggested Framework for Health and Safety Standards

1. Environment

- Potable water
- Toilets
- Lighting
- Sound structural building
- Cleaning, maintenance and refuse disposals
- Hand cleaning station

2. Safety

- Emergency Plan
- Access or make arrangements for 911 calls
- Secure hazardous materials



Suggested Framework for Health and Safety Standards

3. Health

- Policy or plan for dealing with clients medication
- Health care referral information
- Plan for control of communicable diseases
- State and local food safety regulations must be followed if food is provided



Suggested Framework for Health and Safety Standards

4. Staff

- CPR
- TB
- First Aid
- Staff Health
- Background Checks
- Keep staff/volunteers informed of mutual risks between staff and clients

5. Administration

- Guest log/sign-in sheet and maintain for one year minimum (in the event of communicable disease outbreak.)



Suggested Definitions

(See recommendation #7)

- **“Homeless shelter”** means a facility used to provide overnight refuge to a homeless person/s or families.
- **“Homeless person”** is a person/s or family who lacks a regular fixed place to stay.

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